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LITERARY CRITICISM.

L'Évolution de la Critique depuis la Renaissance jusqu'à Nos Jours, par F. BRUNETIÈRE. Deuxième édition. Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1892. 8vo, pp. 283.

THE volume bearing the above title is an introduction to the author's 'L'Évolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature,' which is to appear in three volumes. It is less than a history of French criticism and, in spite of the author's modest statement, more than a mere sketch of it, and were it even nothing but this, we should still be under great obligation to him for having discovered and welded into a solid chain, the many links that lay scattered over the mass of critical French literature accumulated in four centuries.

According to Brunetière, whose statements we follow here as closely as possible, modern criticism had its birth in Italy during the period of Renaissance, when the works of antiquity were to be classified and it was at first, therefore, chiefly philological. Passing from Italy to France this criticism became literary. Joachim du Bellay in his 'Défense et Illustration de la langue française,' which appeared in 1550, recommends the imitation of the Greeks and Romans. His book becomes, as it were, the accepted standard of the poets of the Pléiade, and leads to a rupture with the traditions of the Middle Ages, even with Villon and Marot, and to an alienation of literature from national life.

Scaliger secured the triumph of Roman over Greek models, of Virgil over Homer, and of the Epistle to the Pisones over the Ethics of Aristotle.

Malherbe demanded that even inspiration should submit to logic, and always be able to give the how and the why of its fancy and caprice. Very much unlike Ronsard, who believed the essence of poesy to consist in the inner qualities of sensibility, fancy and imagination, Malherbe emphasized the outward or formal side such as order, clearness, logic, precision and regularity, which for almost two centuries became not the only, but the most prominent and universal features of French literature.

Applied criticism dates in France from

Chapelain's 'Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid.' This criticism endeavors to base its judgments upon more general principles than the mere personal impressions of the critic, and to discover the laws and rules underlying the forms of literature.

Boileau preaches the imitation of nature, but only under the guidance of reason. To imitate nature reasonably means, in the first place, that we should imitate her only so far as she herself is reasonable, that is, conforms to her own plan. Hydrocephalus, for example, is an aberration from her own plan and, therefore, not an object for imitation.

In the second place, it means that we should imitate her only in so far as she is identical with herself in space and time, that is, in so far as she is universal and eternal. In other words, we should try to distinguish the permanent from the ephemeral, the principal from the secondary, the necessary from the accidental.

In the third place, it means that we should imitate nature only so far as she is intelligible and accessible to all. If Boileau so emphatically recommends the ancients as he does, it is simply because he finds that they imitated nature reasonably.

A movement of reaction from this worship of the ancients was led by Perrault against Boileau. Perrault, in defense of the Moderns, wrote his 'Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes,' wherein he enlarges the scope of criticism by extending it over the entire sphere of æsthetics in general. He constantly blends reflections on a strictly literary subject with those on the fine arts, illustrating the one by the other, and trying to bring them both under common principles.

The debate started by Perrault, led to the conviction that the rules and laws derived from the ancient models are not unchangeable, that there may be other models than those of antiquity, and that it is not impossible for modern authors to surpass the ancient. In other words, the belief in the absolute as represented by Boileau's rules and laws is shaken, and yields to a belief in a certain relativity in matters pertaining to art and literature.

Dubos wrote in a similar sense his 'Ré-

flexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture.' He was one of the first to measure the effect of the physical *milieu*, and of time as modifiers of literary form.

Diderot has a stronger claim than even Rousseau to the honor of having enlarged the definition of nature and of the natural in art. He insists upon a more faithful imitation of nature than those before him, and thus started what afterwards was called *naturalism*. The influence of naturalism, however, was counteracted for some time by the humanism of the eighteenth century, the last flickering of dying classicism whose exponent is Laharpe.

The idea of relativity, as conceived by Perrault, triumphs with Rousseau. While literature before him had been pre-eminently the expression of the ideas and sentiments of everybody, it becomes with Rousseau the expression of the particular and private ideas and sentiments of the author. I feel in one way, reasons Rousseau, and you, in another. Our ways of feeling are both legitimate because they are both natural. Only let us be natural by showing ourselves such as we are. But this means that there is no longer an ideal model or type in literature; no law or rule binding every one; the individual is sovereign, nothing is absolute, everything is relative.

With Mme de Staël criticism becomes philosophical. She studies Shakespeare and Goethe, and finds that there is a difference between the French and Teutonic taste; and that the debate on it cannot be decided by a passage from Aristotle or Boileau. The great advance made by Mme de Staël consists in the fact that she no longer considers a literary work as detached from its origin, but tries to determine its relation to the state of civilization whose product it is. This, too, tends to diminish the part of the absolute and to increase that of the relative.

Chateaubriand makes the description of external nature the soul of a new poesy; he teaches how to distinguish epochs and places, the means of their poetic reproduction, and compels criticism to take into account, merits for which it had no weight nor measure, nor even a vocabulary.

In consequence of Mme de Staël's broad and liberal views emphasizing the relative in

literature, Boileau's rigorous rules had lost their authority; the need of a new standard was, therefore, felt by which to judge of the merit of literary works, and to nobody was this want more evident than to Villemain, who holds that a literary work signifies and expresses more than itself and its author, that it is an exponent of the whole epoch. Villemain passes judgment, but according to other principles; the value of works is now measured by the quantity, complexity and delicacy of the relations which they express and by the wealth of their significance. Villemain's chief merit is that he made criticism historical; in his 'Tableau de la littérature française au 18^{me} siècle' he traces the influence of the other nations on the national literature; now, for the first time, it is represented as European. Besides, literary works are no longer merely classified and catalogued, but we see them act upon one another, either support or oppose one another, as well as associate themselves in a common movement.

Sainte-Beuve being interested in the authors as much as in their works, lays stress on the biographical side, and devotes twelve years of his life to composing literary portraits. In his 'Causeries du Lundi' he attacks the problem of what he calls "l'histoire naturelle des esprits;" starting from the fact that among human intellects, as among human faces, there are analogies and differences, he declares that the principal object of criticism must be to seek and to determine these relations; that there is no other way of accomplishing this than to proceed in the manner of naturalists, that is to say, by treatment in a series of monographs. The 'Causeries du Lundi,' in fact, are called by Brunetière a collection of monographs. Thus Sainte-Beuve's chief innovation in criticism is the application of the methods of natural history to the productions of literature.

Taine, who continues the literary tenets of Sainte-Beuve, is very explicit in stating his method.

"The modern method which I try to follow," he says, "consists in considering human works as facts and products, whose characteristics are to be marked and whose causes are to be investigated and nothing more. Thus understood, science neither proscribes nor pardons,

it merely ascertains and explains. It proceeds like botany which studies, with equal interest, the orange-tree and the fir-tree, the laurel and the birch; it is itself a kind of botany applied not to plants, but to human works."

Thus, criticism tends to become really scientific. Taine's principle is: just as all the parts of a living organism stand in correlation or in a necessary connection with one another, so all the parts of a work or of a man, or of an epoch, or of a given nation, form together a connected system, that is, no part of which can change without, thereby, causing a corresponding change in all the others. Therefore, the characteristics of any individual or of any period of civilization being given, Taine's effort has been to distinguish the principal traits from the secondary, to point out the dominant characteristic as that one in which a change causes change in all the rest, particular attention being given to the influence of the race, the *milieu* and the time.

As long as Taine was wrapped up in his strictly scientific method, he formally abstained from criticizing; for "science neither proscribes nor pardons"; yet later on he, too, felt the need of some æsthetic criterion and began, after finding it, to proscribe and to pardon. The value of a literary work is in his opinion proportionate to the degree of permanence or universality of the characteristic features which it expresses, a criterion which scarcely differs from that of Boileau.

Secondly, other things being equal, a work of beneficent character is, according to Taine, superior to a work of maleficent import.

His third principle is the degree of convergence of effects which he expresses thus:

"In a work of art the characteristics whose value we have recognized become as prominent as possible. It is only this way that they receive their brilliancy and relief. For this purpose it is evidently necessary that all the parts of the work should contribute to reveal them. . . . No element must remain inactive or draw the attention elsewhere: this would be a force employed in an opposite direction. All the effects must be convergent."

Taine forms the last link in Brunetière's chain. The next link will be Brunetière himself if he fulfills the promises given. He feels that after proclaiming the relative in literary work, criticism must sooner or later return to

the absolute under the name of beauty; yet he is far from belittling the scientific method of Sainte-Beuve and Taine. While admitting that criticism and natural history are two different things, that there is in man something else and something more than in nature, and that civilization differs from nature, he emphasizes that civilization, on the other hand, is not exclusively an outcome of the human will, but also a work of the instinct; that the productions of man, though differing from those of nature, have, nevertheless, some feature in common with them; that finally the works once detached from their authors live an independent life, and it is for all these reasons he contends that the knowledge of the laws of nature cannot help throwing much light on our understanding of the laws governing the development of human productions. But while Taine based his criticism on the analogies which it presents with the natural history methods of Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier, Brunetière proposes to himself to take for his guidance those furnished by Darwin and Haeckel.

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THE GOSPEL OF LUKE IN ANGLO-SAXON.

The Gospel of Saint Luke in Anglo-Saxon, edited from the manuscripts with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary by JAMES W. BRIGHT, Ph.D. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893. 12mo, pp. xix, 158.

IN this little volume, which comes with the careful editing of Dr. Bright and the comely typography of the Clarendon Press, we have an earnest of a new edition of the Gospels in Old English. All will appreciate the desirability of such work when it is considered that, except for Professor Skeat's admirable synoptical version, we have no edition adequately representing the scholarship of today. Yet the Gospels, although not in standard West-Saxon, give the easiest introduction to English of the oldest period.

Dr. Bright's editorial work consists of an Introduction especially describing the manuscripts, their interrelations, and the printed